

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR RESEARCH PERSONNEL WITH ANIMAL CONTACT

I. OVERVIEW

- A. **Regulatory Authorities:** Pursuant to Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 7303, the VA is authorized to carry out a program of medical research in connection with the provision of medical care and treatment to veterans. VA must ensure that animal research is conducted in environments where proper facilities, professional staffing, and administrative support foster the highest standards of animal care and use.

Each VA Medical Center with a program of research in which laboratory animals are used must establish a program for personnel engaged in the care and use of experimental animals.

This program is offered in compliance with VHA Handbook 1200.7 and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations defining medical surveillance programs for employees potentially exposed to hazardous materials.

B. **Responsible Parties:**

1. The Personnel Health Unit will have responsibility for administration and oversight of the program. The Personnel Health Unit will also be responsible for the medical aspects of the program including maintenance of the medical records.
2. The ACOS-R&D and Principal Investigators will be responsible for providing employee identification, education, training and documentation of the policies related to this program. If applicable and when animals in section IIIE and IIIF are used in the Animal Research Facility.
3. The Research Office will supply, on a quarterly basis, a current list of all WOC employees assigned to the Animal Research Facility and a current list of all active projects involving animal studies (list to include: Principal Investigator, title of the study and the species being studied).
4. In the event that there is an incident, accident or injury to personnel related to animal care or use, the Principal Investigator (supervisor) should be notified by employee/Personnel Health Unit to investigate and provide recommendation for program revision or correction.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- A. **Goal:** This program is designed to monitor and support the health of personnel having direct exposure with a variety of vertebrate animals, animal tissue, body fluids, wastes or living quarters. These personnel may be exposed to occupational hazards such as bites, scratches, or Zoonotic diseases. Personnel may also be allergic to animal proteins or latex.

B. **Participants:** Personnel required to participate in the medical surveillance under this program include medical center employees (including Without Compensation employees), students volunteers or visitors who:

- Have direct exposure to vertebrate animals, unfixed animal tissues, body fluids, wastes or living quarters.
- Work with Zoonotic disease agent(s).
- Personnel involved in isolated, one-time contact will be informed of specific health precautions and appropriate inoculation or medical constraints. Isolated, one-time contact will not require participation in the medical monitoring program.
- Proof must be provided to the IACUC that personnel have been enrolled in this program before they enter the Animal Research Facility (ARF) to work with the animals.

III. **PROGRAM ENROLLMENT**

- A. **Baseline Health Assessment:** All applicants that receive a pre-employment physical exam are routinely questioned regarding anticipated occupational exposure to animals. In addition, other personnel identified by the Research Office that will have exposure to animals will be referred to the Personnel Health Unit for enrollment. Surveillance will depend upon the type of animal contact: small animals (rodents, rabbits), large animals (cats, dogs, livestock), or non-human primates (marmosets, monkeys, apes). The applicant may sign a waiver declining to participate.
- B. **Protection:** All ARF staff and other personnel working in the ARF will be provided protective clothing. This will consist of uniforms, lab coats, gloves, masks, etc. The ARF staff will be provided with steel toe footwear. Protective eye and ear wear is also provided. Warning signs for all rooms that contain hazardous agents are posted on such doors where they are easily seen.
- C. **Personal Hygiene:** The ARF has two bathrooms (men and women) and one shower. Animal rooms and procedural labs have soap dispensers and sinks for hand washing. There is a designated area (room 125) for eating and for storage of food and beverages.
- D. **Routine Testing:** All participants in the Medical Surveillance Program will receive the following for pre-employment:
- Physical Exam including chest x-ray, if warranted (e.g., past history, clinical presentation, known TB or (+) PPD), by appointment, through Personnel Health.
 - Tetanus prophylaxis
 - Tuberculosis screening
 - Hepatitis B Screening/immunization
 - Measles/mumps/rubella/varicella screening

If the above screenings have been performed in the last year at another facility, please provide documentation to the Personnel Health Unit.

E. Large Animal Contact Category Employees: (if applicable) In addition to the routine testing, individuals who will have contact with large animals will be offered:

- Rabies Prophylaxis. For individuals working with the rabies virus, large animals (cats, dogs, livestock) or wild animals, exposure to potentially infected animal body organs, or perform post-mortem examinations on animals with a history of poorly defined neurological disorders. (Since every type of rabies vaccine has shown adverse reactions in some individuals, the use of this vaccine is not mandatory).
- Q Fever Risk Counseling. For Individuals who have direct contact with the organism *Coxiella burnetii* in a research capacity or those who handle or use products from infected sheep, goats or cattle.
- Toxoplasmosis Titer and Counseling. Of particular interest to any female of childbearing capacity. Gestating employees who work directly with cats or their feces are at risk.

F. Non-Human Primate Contact Category Employees: (if applicable) In addition to the routine testing:

- Purified Protein Derivative (PPD) TB skin test every six months
- Periodic chest x-rays for employees with PPD reaction based on Personnel Health Unit clinician discretion
- TB contact study in the event of a work exposure to active TB according to established infection control guidelines
- Rubella: documented proof of immunity or titer
- Rabies Vaccine: working with non-human primates in quarantine
- Hepatitis A for at risk employees
- Herpes virus simiae (B-virus) counseling – paramount for those working with rhesus, cynomolgus and other Asiatic monkeys of the genus *Macaca*
- Serum storage.

G. Allergies (Animal & Latex) - Anyone entering the ARF is alerted by a sign warning that animals are housed in the facility (see attached)

- Animals – if a participant in this program develops signs and symptoms of an animal allergy, they should be encouraged to report to the Personnel Health Unit for evaluation and consultation and administrative/clinical intervention.
- Latex – If a participant in this program develops signs and symptoms of a latex allergy, they should be encouraged to report to the Personnel Health Unit for RAST testing. If positive, then administrative and clinical intervention is indicated, including evaluation by a dermatologist.
- Annual follow-up for the prevention of and development of allergies.

H. Follow-up Health Assessment

Participants are encouraged to have an Annual Examination through the Personnel Health Unit to include an optional physical exam and optional laboratory tests as appropriate:

- PPD TB tests (recommended annually)
- Tetanus immunization/diphtheria booster (at least every 10 years for employees handling animals)

- Annual audiogram (hearing test) for personnel exposed to noise in the rack washer room or loud animals.
- A yearly medical follow-up questionnaire will be given to all participants of the program.

Note: Participants who have had rabies immunization must receive serologic monitoring annually

I. **Emergency Care**

In the event of an accident, (e.g. animal bite, scratch or cut*) or occupational illness, standard procedures should be followed. The individual should report to Personnel Health or the Emergency Room and if time allows, notify their immediate supervisor about the accident/incident or exposure. The immediate supervisor must accompany them to the Personnel Health Unit (Room 512C) or the Emergency Room if the Personnel Health Unit is closed. If the immediate supervisor is not available, the Research Administrative Officer should be notified to accompany employee during working hours. During off-hours, the Administrative Officer of the Day (located in the ER) would accompany the employee and notify the immediate supervisor if possible. Emergency medical care will be provided.

*NOTE: Animal bites and scratches are hazards common to animal facility personnel. All cases should be documented. Tetanus prophylaxis should always be considered and, depending on the species, rabies prophylaxis and antibiotics arranged. (From NIH Publication No. 92-3415 Section C-3.)

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IV. REFERENCES:

1. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, (Washington, DC:NIH Publication No. 85-23, 1985), and subsequent revisions.
2. VHA Handbook 1200.7
3. Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals NRC, National Academy Press, Washington, DC 1997



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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FOR RESEARCH PROGRAM
ANNUAL MEDICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____, _____ SS #: _____ DOB: _____
(last) (first) (xxx-xx-xxxx) (mo/day/yr)

JOB TITLE: _____ DEPARTMENT: _____

PHONE NO.'s TO REACH YOU: (OFFICE): _____ (PAGER/CELL): _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON: _____
(name) (relationship) (phone number(s))

Significant past medical history (hospitalizations, surgeries, infections) including dates:

Have you ever taken any medication that would increase your risk of contracting zoonotic disease, e.g. steroids? _____

Women: pregnancy status? _____

1. Species of laboratory animal(s) you work with : _____

2. Amount of contact time per week (to include contact time with animal tissues, waste, body fluid, carcasses or animal housing):

3. If your work involves human or animal pathogens, list them: _____

4. If your work involves contact with non-human primates:

- Have you ever had a positive PPD (TB skin test) ? _____ Treated? _____
- Were you ever diagnosed with active TB? _____ Treated? _____
- Did you ever receive BCG vaccination ? If so, when? _____

5. As part of your assigned duties how often do you: (circle)

- wear disposable gloves:? never rarely sometimes always
- wear a gown? never rarely sometimes always
- wear a protective cap? never rarely sometimes always
- wear protective eyewear? never rarely sometimes always

6. Do you smoke, eat or drink in animal holding or procedure areas? never rarely sometimes always

7. How often do you wash hands, change clothing or shower after

Handling lab. Animals during the day? never rarely sometimes always

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/>

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8. Do you or any blood relative have any history of (circle any that apply and give details):

- asthma, hay fever, allergic skin problems, eczema, sinusitis, chronic respiratory infections

Details: _____

9. Do you experience any of the following allergic symptoms during or after contact with any laboratory animals? (circle)

- sneezing spells, runny or stuffy nose, watery or itchy eyes, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, rash or hives
- Can you identify which animal species is responsible for your symptoms? _____

10. Do you have any house pets ? _____

11. If you have any history of the following, give details of: dates, severity, corrective measures (e.g. surgery, therapy, med's)

- Hernias (except hiatal): _____
- Back or neck problems: _____
- Joint problems including arthritis: _____

12. Do you work with any chemicals in the workplace? _____

- If so, do you have any symptoms associated with such exposure? _____

13. Immunization & immunity history (**for Personnel Health Unit staff to fill out**)(date/results of vaccination or titre):

- Tetanus td _____
- Measles (rubeola): _____
- Mumps _____
- Rubella _____
- Varicella _____
- Hepatitis B Panel:
 - HBsAg _____
 - HBcAb _____

Last PPD: _____ Positive Negative

Last CXR (for + PPD): _____

- HBsAb _____
- Hepatitis C _____
- Rabies series _____

Personnel Health Unit provider: _____
(printed name)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

BEFORE YOU ENTER THIS AREA

STOP AND READ THIS!!!

**BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE RESEARCH ANIMALS
HOUSED AND/OR USED HERE**

**IF YOU HAVE OR SUSPECT THAT
YOU HAVE ALLERGIES TO**

ANIMALS:

**STOP AND PROCEED TO THE PERSONNEL HEALTH
OFFICE, 512C FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**SPECIES OF ANIMALS USED IN THIS LAB INCLUDE:
RATS, RABBITS, MICE & GUINEA PIGS**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION
RESEARCH SERVICE**